Railway freight charges

765. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Wilf'the Minister RAILWAY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Goverment's attention has been drawn to the news item captioned "Railways line up core sector freight sops to boost earnings", appeared in the Economic Times dated 14th November, 1998;

(b) if so, the reasons for fall in freight;

(c) whether this decline is seasonal; and

(d) the details of steps proposed to arrest this decline in freight earning by Railways?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Drop in demand from the core sectors of the economy which includes power, coal, foodgrains, cement, fertilizer and steel has been mainly responsible for the drop in freight loading. Besides, freight loading has also been affected by strikes in Singareni Collieries, and Chennai Port, and by cyclone in Gujarat.

(c) The decline is not seasonal in nature.

(d) The following measures have been taken to arrest the decline in earnings and to make railway freight rates competitive so as to win back, traffic:—

(i) From 20.6.1998 following revisions had been effected:—

  (a) No general increase in freight charges effected.

  (b) Reduction in classification of gypsum (lumps and powder), limestone and dolomite.

  (c) Continuance of reduced classification for iron and steel items.

  (d) Revision in taper of cement, coal and iron and steel.

(ii) Reduced station to station rates for specific commodities are quoted in deserving cases.

(iii) Volume discount scheme has been introduced in respect of cement, iron & steel, iron ore, sponge iron and clinker traffic for the current year.

(iv) Revision in classification and minimum weight condition of commodities is done, wherever found justified.

(v) Container Corporation of India has created a separate Domestic division to capture less than train load, non-bulk traffic by using the multi-model containerisation route.

Railway projects in Orissa

766. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the ongoing railway projects in Orissa;

(b) the progress of those projects, as on date; and

(c) the details of the estimated cost of those projects and the funds released by the Central Government therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) to (c) Details are given in the Annexure *(See* Appendix 185, Annexure No. 20)

Accidents at Unmanned Level Crossings

767. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA:

Will the Minister RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that RDSO has not come out with any foolproof system to avert accidents at unmanned level crossings;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the present status of research work carried out by RDSO in this regard with details;

(d) whether it is a fact that most of the accidents at the level crossings occur due to lack of whistling signals while trains approach unmanned level crossings; and